Response to Priority Services Register Review

From Derek Russell. Project Officer for Warmer, Wealthier Berwick (a project of Berwick Community Trust)

Question 1.
Do you agree with our final proposals for enhancing eligibility and customer identification and the associated proposed licence conditions?
Yes

Question 2.
Do you agree with our final proposals for amending the PSR services and the associated proposed licence conditions?
No. Whilst the proposed changes are welcome there is a key element missing from what should be available.
It is mentioned in the review that switching uptake rates are lower for vulnerable customers but little in these proposals will make any impact on switching rates. All energy companies should be under an obligation to not only provide information about the better tariffs they offer but also to at least inform vulnerable customers of better deals they can get from other suppliers. This could take the form of a referral to a third party to assist or some suitable simple and accessible process to switch to another supplier. A simple case to illustrate. Today I examined the bills of an elderly blind client who cannot access comparison sites. I did this for him and reduced his bill by £302 (about 25%). No-one is obliged to facilitate such a service at present. This is contrary to the principles of the PSR and discrimination legislation.

Question 3
 Do you agree with our final proposals for recording and sharing information about customers in vulnerable situations and the associated proposed licence conditions?

Yes but is vital that compliance with the proposals is carried out smoothly and by a specific date.

Question 4
Do you agree with our final proposals for raising awareness of the priority services, including any specific suggestions for energy companies to improve awareness?
Ofgem should run or coordinate a proper ongoing publicity campaign.

Question 5
Do you agree with our final proposals for the approach to monitoring energy company performance in this area.
Yes if the results are made public and easily accessible.